A Historical Study of the Major Socio-Cultural Movements in Jharkhand (1871-1932 AD)

Proposed Synopsis for Ph.D Thesis from Ranchi University, Ranchi

University Department of History (Faculty of Social Science)

Ranchi University, Ranchi

Research Supervisor

Dr. Raj Kumar

Assistant Professor

University Department of History

Ranchi University, Ranchi

Researcher

Deepanshu Marandi

UGC-JRF

University Department of History

Ranchi University, Ranchi

A Historical Study of the Major Socio-Cultural Movements in Jharkhand (1871-1932 AD)

1. State of Art

Jharkhand, an eastern state in India, is renowned for its varied tribal communities, distinct cultural identities, tradition, heritage and abundant of mineral resources. According to the literary and archaeological sources, the region has a rich history, with evidence of habitation dating back to the Mesolithic-Chalcolithic period. Today, the state is home to 32 tribes across 24 districts. The early 19th and 20th centuries marked a period of significant transformation and awakening in the state's history. The socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand emerged as responses to the deep-rooted social inequalities, religious practices, and exploitation that prevailed the society. The socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand have often focused on addressing the rights and welfare of the tribal communities, who have historically faced marginalization and discrimination. The encroachment by outsiders and their increasing control over the Chotanagpur tribesmen has a long history. The tribals were very much concerned about the intensions of the local landlords and Thekadars. The latter unlawfully took the lands of the tribals. The situation worsened with the introduction of Permanent Settlement, when the intermediate ownership of the land passed to the landlords. The arrival of Christian missionaries assisted the tribals in resolving conflicts with the landlords and the governments to some extent, but it ultimately proved unsuccessful. Therefore, this was the period when people began agitating and uprising for their self-governance. Under the guidance of a leader, the tribal people initiated their own social and religious practices, renounced alcohol and adopted vegetarianism. Different regions of Jharkhand experienced socio-cultural rebellion at various times, but the goal of each movement was to achieve liberation from harmful practices and exploitation.

The socio-cultural movement refers to the collective efforts by group of people to bring about change in societal values, norms, or practices. These movements often arise in responses to perceived social, cultural, political or economic inequalities. They aim to reshape the way people think, behave, or organize themselves within a society. Similarly, in Jharkhand, between 1871-1932 there were notable movements, like the Sapha Hor, Birsa Munda, Tana Bhagat and Haribaba movements, which were the major socio-cultural movements in the state that reformed and reshaped the community from within. They aimed at the revival and purification of indigenous practices, promoting self-identity, resistance and reform within their community, which ultimately led to a long lasting revolt to attain freedom from exploitation and reclaim their rights. These movements took place in various regions of Jharkhand and were led by different leaders. However, they all shared a common goal that is, securing land rights, eradicating social evils, promoting purification and reforming the community from within. Therefore, this study is an effort to describe the major socio-cultural movements of Jharkhand, highlighting their historical context, key figures, significant events and the impact the have had on the region's socio-cultural and political dynamics.

2. Literature Review

Jharkhand, home to many Adivasis or tribal communities, centers on the principle of 'jal jungle jameen' – water, forest and land. Historically, the tribals had autonomy over their local resources, and outside interference has significantly impacted their sentiments. To escape exploitation, they sought to reform and revitalized their social and cultural practices, forming the foundation of socio-cultural resistance against both the government and local landlords. The study mainly focuses on the Sapha Hor, Birsa Munda, Tana Bhagat and the Haribaba movement, which focused on revitalizing and reforming tribal communities in resistance to government authority. Following are some books , thesis and articles that provide information on the movements. Anamitra Sarkar, in her thesis titled, *"In search of a Moral World the Sapha Hor movement in the Santhal Parganas 1871-1947",* describes the beginning of the Sapha Hor movement led by Bhagirath Manjhi and writes, the santhal movement could not succeed without a complete cultural revitalization

involving the adoption of new beliefs and ethical standards, which would restore the community to its original state of purity. *'His (Bhagirath Manjhi) followers came to be variously known as the Kherwars, Sapha Hor, the Safas or the clean men'*. R. Singh, in his book, *"Tribal Beliefs Practices and Insurrection",* describes, 'during 1860s and 1870s, a charismatic leader emerged among the Santhals with the goal of restoring their former glory and re-establishing their original monotheistic religion. This leader also vowed that, with divine help, they would reclaim their lost lands'. In the same book, R. Singh also mention about Birsa Munda and writes, 'a strong and charismatic leader, who asserted he was *the Dharti Aba* (*father of the world*) or even *the Bhagwan (the supreme God*), preached ideals of rituals purity, morality and asceticism according to Hindu tradition, while opposing the worship of priests. K.K. Dutta in his book*, "History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar",* describes Birsa movement as an internal purification movement, where, *"the followers of Birsa Munda were required to lead chaste and pure life, to refrain from all intoxicants, including 'haria', practice good hygiene, avoid consuming animal products, and wear sacred threads".* After the Birsa Revolt, the Tana Bhagat and the Haribaba movement was influenced by Gandhian principle of non-violence, boycott of foreign goods and peaceful agitation. Sangeeta Dasgupta in her book '*Reordering a world: The Tana Bhagat Movement, 1914-1919*', describes Tana Bhagat movement as a quest for an identity within Oraon society. She writes, 'Tana Bhagat movement sought to challenge the traditional authority of the Pahan (the Oraon priest) and the Mahato (who represented the village in secular matters), she also states that*, "believers were commanded to abstain from consuming alcohol, fowl and pig".* Dr. Sanjay Kumar in his article, *'Haribaba Movement (1931)',* writes, 'the Haribaba movement, led by Duka Ho in 1931, was a revivalist movement that held some political influence of the Congress workers, particularly of Mahatma Gandhi'. Mathew Areeparampil, S.J., in his book, "*Struggle for Swaraj: A History of Adivasi Movements in Jharkhand',* writes about the social practices, which was observed by the followers of Haribaba movement, that, "*maintain cleaniness, practicing purification and adhering to vegetarianism were strongly emphasized. The worship of hanuman and the Tulsi plant was also recommended".*

3. Research Gap

Jharkhand is a state where the inhabitants, primarily the tribal communities have been associated with the fierce nature, revolts and struggle. However, focusing solely on their aggressive nature and history of revolts overlooks another crucial aspects of tribal life in Jharkhand, that is, their dedication to social and cultural reform. Beneath the surface of their defiant spirit lies a deep commitment to improving their way of life, preserving their traditions, and purifying their communities of harmful practices. This lesser-known side of the tribal people reveals a community focused not just on survival through struggle, but on growth and transformation through cultural preservation and reform. As the above mentioned book gives us a brief information about the major socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand, it has certain shortcomings. It does not primarily focus on the purification of the social and cultural life of the tribal people. Before any revolt, there is a phase where people, under the guidance of a leader, strive to reform their community and eliminate harmful practices, setting a stage for a successful uprising. A strong social and cultural foundation is essential for the endurance of any revolt.

In addition to this, the major socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand-such as the Sapha Hor, Birsa Munda, Tana Bhagat and Haribaba movement, are not compiled in a single source. These significant movements are scattered across various books, making it difficult to find a comprehensive reference in one place. Therefore, the aim of this study is to compile all the major socio-cultural movements of Jharkhand in one place, with focus on the social and cultural purification and reformation of the tribal community. By examining these movements collectively, the study will highlight how these efforts towards reform laid the foundation for powerful and enduring revolts.

4. Problems to be Investigated

The socio-cultural movement of Jharkhand is a complex topic with deep historical roots and varied dimensions. Investigating the key problems within this movement, especially in reference to the Sapha Hor movement, Birsa Munda movement, Tana Bhagat movement and the Haribaba movement,

provides a comprehensive understanding of the region's socio-political landscape. The mentioned movements were all responses to colonial oppression and exploitation. Understanding the historical context of these movements is crucial. This includes examining the policies and practices of the British colonial administration, exploitation by the local landlords, loss of land and harmful practices within the communities. The historical grievances which fueled these movements need thorough exploration. Economic inequality and the struggle for land rights were central to these movements. Investigating how colonial economic policies impacted the tribal communities is essential. This includes assessing the effectiveness of land reforms and the implementation of laws that intends to protect tribal rights. Understanding the economic motivations behind these movements can provide insight into the ongoing disparities in Jharkhand. The Sapha Hor, Birsa, Tana Bhagat and Haribaba movements were also driven by the desire to preserve tribal culture and identity. Examining the cultural aspects of these movements involves understanding traditional beliefs, practices and social structures that were threatened by external forces. This includes exploring how these movements sought to revive and protect tribal customs and tradition. Investigating the role of tribal leaders and the strategies they employed to mobilize their communities against oppression is important. Jharkhand's rich natural resources have been both a blessing and a curse for its tribal population. Investigating the environmental impact of the resource extraction and the subsequent movements to protect these resources is crucial. Investigating these problems provides a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainable and inclusive development in the region.

5. Objective of the Study

Jharkhand is a state with a historical background marked by the struggle for identity, liberation from exploitation and the resistance of the tribal community for their legal rights. The objective of this study is to comprehensively examine the socio-cultural movement of Jharkhand by exploring its historical roots, key movements and regarding the influential leaders who provided momentum and proper guidance to the socio-cultural

movement, helping to achieve its objectives. The study aims to analyze the socio-religious, economic and political conditions that prompted these reforms, as well as their impact on the cultural identity and economic development of the region. By investigating the changes brought about in social practices, resource management, and local governance, the study seeks to assess the effectiveness of these movements in addressing issues of social justice, including tribal rights, caste and gender equality. Furthermore, the research will evaluate the political dynamics involved and the challenges and criticisms faced by the socio-cultural movements. Ultimately, the study aims to provide insights into the contemporary relevance of these historical movements and their ongoing influence of Jharkhand's socio-religious and political landscape.

6. Hypothesis

1. The movement arose from grievances against colonial exploitation and tribal marginalization.

2. Economic inequalities and land rights struggles fueled these movements to address injustices.

3. The movements aimed to protect tribal culture and traditions from external threats.

4. Leaders empowered tribal communities through social reforms and collective actions.

5. The movements boosted political awareness and demands for tribal rights.

6. The movements resisted local landlords and external exploiters threatening tribal autonomy.

7. Environmental concerns especially resource extraction drove the movements to protect tribal lands.

7. Research Methodology

The research methodology for the study includes a comprehensive review of existing literature, including books, journals, articles and historical documents related to the major socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand. Analysis of primary sources such as historical records and colonial documents to gather information about the social-political conditions during the time of these movement. Qualitative Research which includes interviews with the tribal communities to gather oral histories and testimonies for understating the local perspectives and experiences related to these movements. Field research by visiting key locations associated with the movements, such as historical sites, tribal villages and movement related landmarks. Collecting data through observations and interactions with the local communities to gain firsthand information about the impact of these movements. This methodology will provide a thorough understanding of the socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand, highlighting their historical context, key figures, and lasting effects on the region.

7.1. Chapterization

Introduction

Chapter 1 – Historical Background

Chapter 2 – Sapha Hor Movement

Chapter 3 – Birsa Munda Movement

Chapter 4 – Tana Bhagat Movement

Chapter 5 – Haribaba Movement

Conclusion

Reference

Appendix

7.2. Tools to be used in Data Collection

For the topic the socio-cultural movement of Jharkhand, the following tools can be used in the data collection: archival research to access historical documents, records and manuscripts from libraries and archives; interviews with historians, scholars and experts familiar with Jharkhand's history and tribal movements; surveys to collect quantitative data from knowledgeable individuals; oral histories to gather personal stories and testimonies from tribal community members and descendants of key figures; field observations and relevant historical sites, museum, and locations; document analysis of newspaper, pamphlets, and other publications from the period; case studies of specific events, leaders or aspects of the movements; and government reports for information on policy changes and administrative responses. Using these tools will provide a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the major socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand.

8. Significance of the Study

The study of the major socio-cultural movement in Jharkhand holds significant importance as it offers a deep understanding of the historical struggle for identity, rights and resistance against exploitation faced by the tribal communities. This historical perspective is essential for appreciating the current socio-political landscape of the region and recognizing the enduring impacts of the past movements on the present day issues. The study highlights the contribution of the influential leaders who played pivotal roles in guiding these movements. By analyzing their strategies and leadership, we can gain insights into effective methods of mobilizing communities and advocating for social change. The study provides an assessment of the cultural and economic impacts of the socio-cultural resistance movements, offering a comprehensive view of how these efforts have transformed local tradition, governance and economic practices. Therefore, the major socio-cultural movement of Jharkhand is significant for its comprehensive approach to addressing historical injustices, promoting economic empowerment and ensuring political autonomy. It reflects the aspirations of the indigenous population for a more equitable and just society, where their rights and identities are respected and

preserved. The movement continues to inspire contemporary efforts towards sustainable development and social justice in the region.

9. Relevance of the Research work

The study of the major socio-cultural movement in Jharkhand is highly relevant for multiple reasons. Firstly, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the socio-political, religious, and political transformation that has shaped the State. Jharkhand, with its rich history of tribal resistance and struggle for identity, has experienced significant changes due to various socio-cultural movements. By examining these movements, the study sheds light on how the indigenous communities have fought for their rights and identity, resisting exploitation and advocating for legal and social justice. Secondly, the study is relevant in highlighting the role of influential leaders who guided these movements. These leaders not only provided the necessary momentum but also shaped the ideologies and strategies that led to tangible outcomes. Understanding their contributions helped in appreciating the leadership styles and strategies that were effective in mobilizing communities and achieving reform objectives. Furthermore, the study's relevance extends to its examination of the cultural and economic impact of the socio-cultural movement. By assessing how these movements influenced local tradition, governance and economic practices, the research provides insights into the broader implications of social and religious reforms on community life. It not only enhances our understanding of the regions' past struggles and achievements but also provides valuable lessons for contemporary and future efforts towards social justice, religious practices and development.

10. Contribution to the Existing Knowledge

The study of the major socio-cultural movements of Jharkhand, focusing on the Sapha Hor, Birsa, Tana Bhagat and Haribaba movements, contributes significantly to our understanding of the tribal resistance and socio-political changes. These movements are pivotal in highlighting the unique struggles faced by tribal communities under colonial rules and local exploitation. By

delving into the historical context of these movements, this research uncovers the underlying causes of discontent among the tribal, such as land dispossession, economic hardship and cultural erosion. Examining the Sapha Hor movement reveals the early resistance against the British policies and the impact of missionary activity on tribal societies. The Birsa Munda movement led by the legendary tribal leader Birsa Munda, provides crucial insights into the fight for land rights and self- governace. This movement not only challenged British authority but also sought to revive traditional tribal cultures on religion, thereby strengthening tribal identity. Tana Bhagat movement, known for its non- violence approach, offers a different perspective on resistance .It emphasized social reforms, including the rejection of alcohol and a return to indigenous religious practices, which helped unify and strengthen the tribal community. Similarly, the Haribaba movement highlights the spiritual and the cultural dimensions of tribal resistance, focusing on the preservation of tribal customs and resistance to external influences. The research also sheds light on the broader socio-economic impacts of these movements, such as their role in shaping contemporary tribal policies and their influence on later tribal movements in the region. It provides a comprehensive analysis of how these movements have contributed to the political awakening and empowerment of tribal communities in Jharkhand. Overall, this research enriches existing knowledge by providing a detailed and nuanced understanding of the major socio-cultural movements in Jharkhand, their historical significance and their lasting impact on tribal society and culture.

11. Future work

The major socio-cultural movement of Jharkhand, particularly focusing on the Sapha Hor, Birsa Munda , Tana Bhagat and Haribaba movement can delve into unexplored narratives and lesser- known contribution to these movements. Analyzing the long term socio-economic impacts on contemporary Jharkhand, especially how these historical movements have shaped current policies and tribal conditions is essential. Comparative studies with other global indigenous movements and can offer broader perspective and strategies for addressing ongoing issues. Additionally, examining the environmental dimensions of these movements and their alignment with sustainable development can provide valuable insights.

Reference

1. Areeparampil Mathew, (2002), '*Struggle for swaraj: A History of the Adivasi Movements in Jharkhand',* Tribal Research Institute and Training Centre, Chaibasa, West Singhbhum.

2. Bodding P.O., L.O. Skrefsrud, Sten Konow, (1994), '*Tradition and Institutions of the Santhals',* Manohar , New Delhi.

3. Datta K.K., (July,1957), '*History of Freedom Movement in Bihar, Vol1- 1857-1928',* Published by the Government of Bihar, Patna.

4. Ekka Philip, (1966), '*The Tana Bhagat (A Study in Social Change)'*, [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oxford], Campion Hall, University of Oxford.

5. O'Malley L.S.S.,(1910), '*Bengal District Gazeteers Santhal Parganas',* The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot. Calcutta.

6. Roy S.C.,(1968), *'The Mundas and their Country',* Crown Publication, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

7. Roy Sarat Chandra,(2012), '*Oraon Religion and Customs',* Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi.

8. Sa Fidelis de, (May,1975), *' Crisis in Chotanagpur*' A Redemptorist Publication, Bangalore, India

9. Singh Kumar Suresh, (2001), *'Birsa Munda aur Unka Andolan 1872-1901'* Vani Prakashan, New Delhi.

10. Singh K.S., (1982), *'Tribal Movements in India Vol2',* Manohar Publication, New Delhi.

11. Singh K.S., (1987), *'The Chotanagpur Raj: Mythology, Structure and Ramification', in Sinha Surjit (ed.) 'Tribal Politics and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India',* Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

12. Singh R., (2000), '*Tribal Beliefs Practices and Insurrection',* Anmol Publication Pvt.Ltd, New Delhi.

13. Sinha Surendra Prasad, (1964), *'Life and Times of Birsa Bhagwan',* Published by Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Ranchi.

14. Troisi J., (1979), *'The Santhals Readings in Tribal Life, A work in Ten Volumes, Volume 8: Social Movements and Change',* Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

Web Sources:

1. Chandra Uday, (2016), *'Flaming fields and forest fires: Agraian transformation and the making of Birsa Munda's rebellion'* in *'The Indian Economic and Social Science Review, 53, 1: 1-30',* SAGE, Los Angeles/ London/ New Delhi/ Singapore/ Washington DC. ***DOI:*** *10. 1177/0019464615619540.* Retrieved on July 19, 2024, from *http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in*

2. Dasgupta Sangeeta, (1999), *'Reordering a world: The Tana Bhagat Movement 1914-1919'*, SAGE Publication. Retrieved on July 16, 2024, from *http://sih.sagepub.com*

3. Kumar Sanjay, (April,2017), *'Haribaba Movement 1931',* in *'Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education Vol.13, Issue no.1.* Retrieved on July 4, 2024, from *www.ignited.in*

4. Sarkar Anamitra, (2017), *'In search of a Moral World The Sapha Hor Movements in the Santhal Parganas 1871-1947'*, [Doctoral Dissertation, Jadavpur University], Jadavpur University, Kolkata, Retrieved on July 17, 2024, from *http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in*

(Dr. Raj Kumar) (Deepanshu Marandi)

Research Supervisor **Researcher**